

House Judiciary Committee
**HB 1431 – State and Local Agencies – Enforcement of Federal Immigration Law – Restrictions on
Access to Information (Maryland Data Privacy Act)**
February 27, 2025

Dear Honorable Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Bartlett, and Members of the Committee,

The Esperanza Center is a comprehensive resource center whose mission is to welcome immigrants by offering hope, compassionate services, and the power to improve their lives. As part of Catholic Charities of Baltimore, for over 60 years we have welcomed immigrants from all over the world, and provide services related to education, health care, immigration legal matters, family reunification, and general community support. **From this perspective, the Esperanza Center supports HB 1431.**

In recent years, the erosion of data privacy protections has led to increased fear and uncertainty within immigrant communities. The Maryland Data Privacy Act, HB1431, takes critical steps to restore trust by ensuring that state and local agencies, as well as law enforcement entities, are prohibited from sharing personal information, facial recognition data, and access to public facilities with federal immigration authorities unless a valid warrant is presented.

The women, men, and children served by Esperanza Center engage with us each day to improve and maintain their education, their personal health and wellness, and their ability to live into their professional and personal goals. By protecting sensitive data and information, these same people and valued members of our community will have the confidence and trust to continue this engagement. Children will continue to receive critical education, families will continue to receive primary and preventive healthcare, communities and neighborhoods will continue to benefit from civic engagement as residents feel safe working with and supporting their neighbors.

Since the Trump Administration removed safeguards to sensitive locations on January 21, 2025, we have heard concerns from our clients that parents are withholding their children from school, and primary care patients are afraid to seek necessary specialty care at area hospitals or collect medications at regional pharmacies. This fear is not solely related to the threat of ICE enforcement in sensitive locations; it is in equal measure a fear that their personal information is no longer safe. It is unacceptable to the health and wellness of our shared community that any child or parent feel fear to engage in the school system, or feel compelled to decline life saving specialty care or medication. A parent whose US Citizen child may benefit from free school lunch or the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program should not be forced to choose between their child's nutrition and their fear of ICE enforcement due to data sharing.

Access to sensitive data and facilities requires a valid court-issued warrant. Personal information cannot be shared with federal immigration authorities without legal due process. This legislation is crucial not only for protecting the privacy of all Maryland residents but also for fostering trust between immigrant communities and public institutions. By clearly delineating the boundaries of federal immigration enforcement within our state, we promote the values of dignity, safety, and fairness.

In 2021, this legislature took action to protect immigrants and safeguard their sensitive data. Esperanza Center once again calls on this legislature to act. **I urge the committee to provide a favorable report on HB 1431.**

Submitted by: Matthew Dolamore, Esperanza Center Program Director, MDolamore@cc-md.org